

Message Text

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21

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FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7375

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY CONARKY

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 1012

EO 11652:GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, DM

SUBJ: POST CRISIS WRAP-UP

REF COTONOU 939

SUMMARY: DAHOMEY HAS BEEN OUTWARDLY CALM FOR LAST TEN DAYS
THOUGH RESENTMENT AGAINST KEREKOU REMAINS HIGH. MANY OBSERVERS
EXPECT MORE TROUBLE LATER. TRADE UNION LEADERS AND OTHERS
HAVING PROMINENT ROLES IN THE GENERAL STRIKE ARE STILL IN
JAIL. PARTICIPANTS IN THE STRIKE HAVE BEEN FIRED FROM THEIR
JOBS. THOSE ROUNDED UP IN CONNECTION WITH THE DESTRUCTION AT
ABOMEY AND BOHICON HAVE BEEN SENTENCED TO WORK GANGS FOR THE
REST OF THE YEAR. ONE UNEXPECTED BY-PRODUCT OF THE CRISIS
WAS A CHANGE OF GOVT TACTICS TOWARD THE US. SINCE A FEW DAYS
AFTER THE CRISIS BEGAN, MINISTERS AND SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS
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HAVE BEEN FRIEDLIER THEN BEFORE, AND US AID HAS EVEN BEEN

MENTIONED A FEW TIMES IN THE MEDIA. END SUMMARY.

1. THE POPULAR PROTEST AGAINST KEREKOU HAVING BEEN PUT DOWN BY FORCE TEN DAYS AGO, THE GOVT IS NOW WORKING HARD AT CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE OF NORMALCY. KEREKOU HAS BEEN OUT PROJECTING A "FATHER" IMAGE--VISITING VICTIMS OF FLOODS CAUSED BY RECENT HEAVY RAINS AND MEETING WITH THIRD YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TAKING A REQUIRED IDEOLOGICAL TRAINING COURSE, WHILE HIS WIFE IS UNDER CARE (AND GUARD) AT THE COTONOU HOSPITAL AFTER REPORTEDLY BEING POISONED. FORNMIN MICHEL ALLADAYE HAS RETURNED TO THE FORNMIN AFTER SEVERAL WEEKS IN ABOMEY WHERE HE ALLEGEDLY WAS SENT TO RESTORE CIVIL ORDER. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY MONTHS, DAHOMEY'S MINISTERS APPEAR TO BE CONDUCTING BUSINESS IN THEIR MINISTRIES.

2. TRADE UNION LEADERS AND OTHERS HAVING PROMINENT ROLES IN THE GENERAL STRIKE ARE STILL IN JAIL. THEY, AS WELL AS ALL OTHERS WHO SIGNED STRIKE PETITIONS, HAVE BEEN FIRED FROM THEIR JOBS AND SENTENCED TO SERVE IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION WORK GANGS UNTIL DEC 31, 1975. THOSE ARRESTED FOR "VANDALISM" IN BOHICONO AND ABOMEY HAVE BEEN SENT TO WORK GANGS SUPERVISED BY THE ARMY ENGINEERS. THE SENTENCE PRONOUNCED ON THE LATTER GROUP HAS A "MARXIST" CLASS TWIST TO IT. THE GOVT WILL PROVIDE SUBSISTENCE, BUT NOT TO ANY PERSON WHO IS A MEMBER OF THE LIBERAL PROFESSIONS. THE LATTER MUST REIMBURSE THE GOVT FOR THESE COSTS. NO WORKER, PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, MAY LEAVE THE COUNTRY WITHOUT THE GOVT'S WRITTEN AUTHORIZATION.

3. WE HAVE NOW LEARNED THAT THE GOVT TOOK EXTRAORDINARY MEASURES TO WIN AND KEEP THE LOYALTY OF THE ARMED FORCES DURING THE CRISIS. SUBSTANTIAL DAILY RATIONS OF BEER AND WHISKEY WERE ISSUED FREE. EACH OFFICER AND ENLISTED MAN RECEIVED A "MAINTENANCE OF ORDER" BONUS DAILY. (ENLISTED MEN GOT 250 CFA, NCO'S 500 CFA AND OFFICERS 1,000 CFA). THE CONVOCAION OF THE UNEMPLOYED WAS APPARENTLY NOT AIMED AT MILITARY RECRUITMENT (SEE COTONOU 923). INSTEAD, IT WAS A PLOY TO MAKE THEM THINK

KEREKOU WAS DOING SOMETHING ABOUT THEIR SITUATION AND THUS GIVING THEM A SHAKE IN HIS CONTINUATION IN POWER. IT SERVED
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TO REMOVE THEM FROM THE POOL OF POTENTIAL TROUBLE-MAKERS UNTIL THE CRISIS WAS OVER.

4. AS IS ALWAYS THE CASE, CERTAIN "REPORTS" RECEIVED

DURING THE HEAT OF THE CRISIS HAVE PROVED INACCURATE. FOR EXAMPLE

FORMER PRESIDENT LT COL ALPHONSE ALLEY WAS WIDELY REPORTED

TO HAVE ESCAPED TO TOGO AFTER THE ABOMEY PRISON WAS BURNED DOWN. ACTUALLY, THE FIRE CAUSED ALLEY TO LEAVE, BUT INSTEAD OF ESCAPING HE TURNED HIMSELF IN OR WAS RECAPTURED AND HAS NOW BEEN SENT TO ANOTHER PRISON IN THE PORTO-NOVO AREA. IF THE OTHER THREE EX-PRESIDENTS WERE EVERY BROUGHT TO THE PRESIDENT'S PALACE, THEY WERE APPARENTLY NOT THERE VERY LONG AND ARE SAID NOW TO BE IN AVRANKOU. THERE IS ALSO SOME DOUBT WHETHER ROBERT VINYOR, PREFECT OF THE ZOU, EVERY ACTUALLY FLED ABOMEY AS REPORTED IN COTONOU 907. REPORTS OF A GUINEAN TROOP PRESENCE ARE OPEN TO QUESTION. IT IS NOW SAID THAT SEKOU TOURE GAVE KEREKOU SEOM PARACHUSTIST UNIFORMS UNLIKE ANYTHING WORN HERE. AT LEAST SOME OF THE "GUINEANS" MAY HAVE BEEN DAHOMEANS IN THOSE UNIFORMS.

5. ONE TOTALLY UNEXPECTED ASPECT OF THE POST-CRISIS PERIOD IS A SHIFT IN TACTICS BY THE DAHOMEAN GOVT TOWARD THE UNITED STATES. THE CHANGE HAS MANIFESTED ITSELF IN SEVERAL FORMS. AFTER SEVEN MONTHS OF TOTALLY IGNORING AMERICAN AID, THE OFFICIAL MEDIA HAVE, IN THE LAST FORTNIGHT, OCCASSIONALLY MENTIONED US ASSISTANCE. ONE DAY PART OF AN INSIDE PAGE WAS DEVOTED TO IT. SIX GOVT MINISTERS ATTENDED OUR JULY 4TH RECEPTION, BY FAR THE MOST TO TAKE PART IN ANY FOREIGN DIPLOMATIC FUNCTION IN THE PAST YEAR OR SO. (SIX ALSO ATTENDED THE FRENCH EMBASSY'S BASTILLE DAY RECEPTION.) ALTHOUGH IT TOOK THE AMBASSADOR SIX MONTHS TO COMPLETE HIS INITIAL PROTOCOL CALLS AND HE ONCE WAITED MORE THAN TWO MONTHS TO SEE THE FOREIGN MINISTER, HE WAS ABLE TO OBTAIN PROMPTLY APPOINTMENTS WITH PRES KEREKOU AND SEVERAL OF HIS MINISTERS DURING THE PAST TEN DAYS. SOME OF THOSE MEETINGS RECEIVED BACK-PAGE BUT NEVERTHELESS (BY LOCAL STANDARDS) RESPECTABLE PRESS COVERAGE WHICH STRESSED THE THEME OF DAHO-AMERICAN COOPERATION. THE ATMOSPHERE AT THOSE AND OTHER MEETINGS BETWEEN EMBASSY OFFICERS AND FORNMIN OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN NOTICABLY FRIENDLIER

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THAN BEFORE.

6. COMMENT: THERE IS AN OUTWARD ATMOSPHERE OF NORMALCY IN DAHOMEY, THOUGH CONTROLS HAVE INCREASED PERCEPTUALLY AND RESENTMENT AGAINST KEREKOU REMAINS AS STATED. MANY ASSUME THAT THERE WILL BE MORE TROUBLE HERE, WHEN THERE IS ANOTHER OCCASION LIKE THE AIPKE MURDER TO SPARK A PUBLIC OUTBURST, AND KEREKOU'S GUARD IS DOWN. TO MAKE THIS POINT, A FRIENDLY LOCAL OFFICIAL CITED A LOCAL PROVERB THAT "VENGEANCE IS A LUNCH THAT IS EATEN COLD."

7. THERE ARE VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF THE NEW DAHOMEAN GOVT-TACTICS. MOST OBSERVERS ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT THE GOVT, UNDER GREAT STRESS, THOUGHT IT BEST TO MAKE IT APPEAR

AS IF DAHOMEY'S GENEROUS WESTERN DONORS SUPPORTED KEREKOU. OTHERS HAVE ARGUED THAT AIKPE'S DISAPPEARANCE MADE IS POSSIBLE FOR KEREKOU TO PULL AWAY FROM HOSTILITY TOWARD THE WEST (UNTIL AZONHIHO AROSE IN LATE 1974, AIKPE WAS ALWAYS CONSIDERED THE PRINCIPAL ENEMY OF THE WEST AND THE LEADING RADICAL). COUPLED WITH THE ABOVE INTERPRETATIONS ARE REPORTS OF GROWING DISILLUSIONMENT, SOMETHING HINTED DIRECTLY TO US, ON THE PART OF DAHOMEAN MINISTERS, OVER THE UNPRODUCTIVE CHARACTER OF THE RECENT COZY RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, THE PRC AND NORTH KOREA.

8. THE FRENCH EMBASSY CONSIDERS, AS WE DO, THAT THE SHIFT IN THE DAHOAN OFFICIAL ATTITUDE TOWARD THE US (WHICH IS MUCH LESS PRONOUNCED VIS-A-VIS FRANCE) IS PROBABLY ONLY A TEMPORARY TACTIC, DESIGNED TO GET THE GOVT THROUGH A DIFFICULT PERIOD. BOTH MISSIONS BELIEVE THAT, IN ORDER TO PLEASE DISAFFECTED ELEMENTS OF THE LEFT, THE MAIN SUPPORT OF THE REGIME, WHO ARE SHAKEN AND SPLIT BY AIKPE'S MURDER, THE GOVT WILL CONTINUE ON ITS WAY TOWARD NATIONALIZATION OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND REGIMENTATION OF THE POPULATION ALONG GUINEAN LINES. THE SUDDEN CORDIALITY TOWARD US IS, OF COURSE, WELCOME, AND WE WILL ENDEAVOR TO TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF IT. END COMMENT. ENGLE

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